

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 9, 1997

TO: Division of Shellfish Sanitation Staff

FROM: Robert E. Croonenberghs, PhD, Director
Division of Shellfish Sanitation

THROUGH: Eric H Bartsch, PE, Director
Office of Water Programs

SUBJECT: Seawater Monitoring Program, Procedure, Handling of Fish for Testing by VIMS

PURPOSE

The objective of this protocol is to establish a procedure for collecting fish from fish kill sites for transport to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)

INTRODUCTION

VIMS is the agency responsible for evaluating dead fish or fish with lesions to determine the cause of the problem. Unless the fish samples are properly handled, they are of little use to VIMS, thus they have developed the protocol below for handling samples. DSS staff shall follow this protocol when collecting fish for VIMS, and should inform the public of this procedure, should they call one of our offices desiring to submit fish samples to someone. Do not collect or handle fish from fish kills or fish with lesions without wearing protective clothing such as rubber gloves, etc.

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING FISH SAMPLES FOR VIMS

1. As soon as possible after collection place on ice or in a refrigerator.
2. DO NOT freeze or preserve in formalin. Freezing may kill bacteria in the lesion making bacterial culture analyses impossible. The ice crystals formed in the fish tissue also disrupt normal histology making histological analysis impossible. Preservation in formalin also kills bacteria.
3. Transport to VIMS (Gloucester Point) in a cooler on ice as soon as possible; the same day is, of course, preferable. Fish that have been out of the water for three or four days are difficult to assess unless there is an obvious parasite.
4. Try to determine day, time and exact location of collection.
5. Notify VIMS of the expected time of arrival (Wolf Vogelbein at 804-684-7261 or Dave Zwerner at 804-684-7249 or Gene Bureson at 804-684-7108). Mark Luckenbach at VIMS, Eastern Shore Laboratory, at Wachapreague (757-787-5834) can assist with transport from the Eastern Shore if necessary. I know everyone is busy, so we can arrange to pick up samples or meet people at designated locations if there is an anticipated problem with transport-just call.

If there are any questions, let me know.
Gene

Eugene Burreson

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